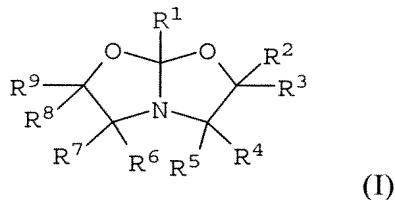


THE PENDING CLAIMS

1. (Previously presented) A process for postcrosslinking a water-absorbing polymer, which process comprises treating said polymer with a postcrosslinker and, during or after said treating, postcrosslinking and drying by temperature elevation, said postcrosslinker being a compound of a formula (I)



wherein R¹, R², R³, R⁴, R⁵, R⁶, R⁷, R⁸, and R⁹ are each independently hydrogen, C₁-C₁₂-alkyl, C₂-C₁₂-alkenyl, or C₆-C₁₂-aryl, wherein C₁-C₁₂-alkyl, C₂-C₁₂-alkenyl, or C₆-C₁₂-aryl may be halogen substituted.

2. (Previously presented) The process of claim 1 wherein said postcrosslinker is of the formula (I) wherein R¹ is C₁-C₆-alkyl, C₂-C₆-alkenyl, or C₆-C₇-aryl, R², R⁴, R⁶, and R⁸ are each independently hydrogen, and R³, R⁵, R⁷, and R⁹ are each independently hydrogen, C₁-C₄-alkyl, or C₂-C₄-alkenyl, wherein C₁-C₄-alkyl or C₂-C₄-alkenyl may be fluorine substituted.

3. (Previously presented) The process of claim 1 wherein said postcrosslinker is 1-aza-4,6-dioxabicyclo[3.3.0]octane.

4. (Currently amended) The process of claim 1 wherein said polymer to be postcrosslinked (a) contains structural units derived from acrylic acid or acrylic esters or (b) is obtained by graft copolymerization of acrylic acid or acrylic esters onto a water-soluble polymeric matrix.

5. (Previously presented) The process of claim 1 wherein said postcrosslinker is a surface postcrosslinker which is used as a solution in an inert solvent.

6. (Previously presented) The process of claim 5 wherein said inert solvent comprises an aqueous solution of glycerol, methanol, ethanol, isopropanol, ethylene glycol, 1,2-propanediol, 1,3-propanediol, or mixtures thereof.

7. (Previously presented) The process of claim 5 wherein said inert solvent is water or a mixture of water with a mono- or a polyfunctional alcohol which has an alcohol content in the range from 10% to 90% by weight.

8. (Previously presented) The process of claim 1 wherein said postcrosslinker is used in an amount from 0.01% to 5% by weight, based on the weight of said polymer.

9. (Withdrawn) A water-absorbing polymer prepared by the process of claim 1.

10. (Withdrawn) A water-absorbing polymer of claim 8 characterized by an absorbency under load (AUL) at 0.7 psi (4830 Pa) of at least 15 g/g.

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Withdrawn) A hygiene article comprising a water-absorbing polymer prepared by the process of claim 1.

13. (Withdrawn) A packaging material comprising a water-absorbing polymer prepared by the process of claim 1.